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Magazine Keeping Mum On Names Of Spies In Iran

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WASHINGTON — For fear of getting someone killed, editors of a publication that specializes in unmasking CIA agents won't reveal the identities, or even say if they know the identities, of CIA agents assigned to Iran.

And the editors of the Covert Action Information Bulletin claim that while they have been keeping silent, they have been besieged by calls from American newspaper and TV reporters, all of whom have asked for names of CIA agents in Iran.

An editorial in the latest issue of the magazine says:

"Within days of the takeover of the embassy, we were swamped with calls from reporters with the networks, the wire services and many major national newspapers and magazines, asking, almost pleading, for the names of CIA personnel in Tehran."

The editorial continued:

"Some of the same people who cluck their tongues when we publish our magazines were thirsting for blood, for an international incident, for a page one byline."

Louis Wolf, one of the editors, claims some of the callers were "really pleading, imploring us to give them names."

William Schaap, another editor of the publication that has been condemned for identifying agents, called media requests for names "irresponsible."

Schaap said that for the anti-spy magazine there was "nothing to be gained" by the release of names of agents who may be hostages. He left unclear whether he knows the names of CIA agents in Iran.

The only effect of releasing names, Schaap said, would be to "put a person's life in danger."

That is exactly what Covert Action

has been accused of doing ever since it began appearing a year ago with a special section called, "NAMING NAMES."

There are proposals before Congress that would outlaw the unmasking of agents, and CIA Director Stanfield Turner has said the disclosure of names has jeopardized "the safety and well-being of our officers and their families."

Months before the Iranian crisis, Turner said, "Given the presence of terrorist or violence-prone organizations in many countries, CIA officers publicly identified are subject to harassment and substantial danger of injury or death."

In the past, the editors of the Covert Action Information Bulletin have disagreed. Their often-repeated position is:

"Although we name names and expose CIA officers and operations — out of our distaste for what the CIA has become — we have never felt that doing so placed them in physical danger. That is because their value as undercover subverters and corrupters is lost when they are exposed."

This month's issue purports to unmask 16 agents. Although CIA agents in Iran aren't mentioned, two alleged CIA agents in Saudi Arabia, one agent in Morocco and one in the Soviet Union are named.

The Covert Action Information Bulletin has never included CIA agents assigned to Iran in its monthly "NAMING NAMES" features.

But a book co-authored by two of the magazine's editors, Wolf and ex-CIA agent James Agee, lists an alleged CIA agent who arrived in Iran in 1976 among the 711 agents that it claims to name. Wolf said he doesn't know if the agent is still in Iran.